

Typological Features of the European and Asian Parts of the Russian Border: The Example of the Northwestern and Far Eastern borders

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the high differentiation of the European and Asian parts of the Russian border regarding the level and rate of development of cross-border relations. In the author's opinion, the main reasons of such differentiation are related to typological features of the given parts of the border, which are caused by the history of their formation and development. The content and origin of the typological features of the European and Asian parts of the Russian border are studied in two representative segments – the Northwestern and Far Eastern – which have strong distinctions in terms of volumes of cross-border flows of people, goods and investments. Based on the developed typology of state borders, the author examines the process of historical development of the Northwestern and Far Eastern parts of the border of Russia from the end of the eighteenth to the beginning of the twenty-first century. These border segments are now at different stages of their typological evolution. The Northwestern border, during the post-Soviet period, has embarked on the road to becoming a transnational border type, but the Far Eastern border has not yet completed the process of forming the attributes of a linear border type.

Considering the limits of any state, we usually imagine them as something uniform and homogeneous, the same in its nature as the object whose attributes they are. This approach is applied to the Russian border, which in many publications is presented as a certain indivisible, undifferentiated image or concept. However, Russia is a vast and extremely diverse state with the longest borders in the world. Therefore such simplified representations are a superficial and grossly distort reality.

Careful researchers of the problems of history and theory of the Russian border, such as Dmitrii Zamiatin, Sergei Korolev, Anatolii Remnev, Vadim Tsimburskii, and Igor Iakovenko,¹ have

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¹ Dmitrii Zamiatin, *Modelirovanie Geograficheskikh Obrazov. Prostranstvo Gumanitarnoi Geografii [Modeling of Geographical Images: Space of Humane Geography]* (Smolensk: Oikumena, 1999); Sergei Korolev, "Kraia Prostranstva. Rossiiskaia Granitsa: Genezis i Tipologiiia [The Edges of Space. The Russian Border: Genesis and Typology]," *Otechestvennye Zapiski* 6 (2002): 258-270; Anatolii Remnev, *Rossiiia Dalnego Vostoka. Imperskaia*

repeatedly pointed to the profound qualitative differences between its several major parts, including its Asian and European parts. The presence of typological features in different spatial sectors of the Russian border perimeter is stressed also in some studies of its current state.² However, separate studies of geographic differentiation of the Russian border remain fragmented and weakly connected to each other. They have neither provided a complete description of the typological features of the different sections of the border nor have they identified their origin. In this article I will attempt to fill this gap.

Before turning to a full-scale typological description of the parts of the Russian border and coverage of the historical formation of their features, it is necessary to specify the problem and its relevance. To address some of the scientific and practical problems (for example, to study the relations of Russia with some of the 14 contiguous states or cross-border linkages of 46 border regions of the Russian Federation), the Russian border perimeter can be divided into tens of special segments. However, the subject of this study is the most fundamental way of differentiating this perimeter as European and Asian. Historically, the configuration of parts of the border of Russia has repeatedly changed. Nevertheless, on the whole its European part can be defined as the border of the European macro-region of Russia with its western neighbors, stretching from the Barents Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south.³ Much more extensive – from the Black Sea to the Sea of Japan – the Asian part includes external borders of such macro-regions of Russia as the Caucasus, Siberia and the Far East.⁴

The typological features of the European and Asian parts of the Russian border provide a basis for their further internal differentiation. Most clearly and fully these features manifest in the extreme northwestern segment⁵ of the European and the extreme southeastern (or Far Eastern) segment⁶ of the Asian parts of the Russian border. It is these two segments that will be the focus of

Geografiia Vlasti XIX – Nachala XX vekov [Russia of the Far East; Imperial Geography of Power of Nineteenth to the Beginnings of the Twentieth Centuries] (Omsk: Izd-vo Omsk. gos. un-ta, 2004); Vadim Tsimburskii, *Rossiia – Zemlia za Velikim Limitrofom: Tsvilizatsiia i ee Geopolitika [Russia – The Land behind the Great Limitrofom: Civilisation and its Geopolitics]* (Moscow: Editorial URSS, 2000); Igor Iakovenko, *Rossiiskoe Gosudarstvo: Natsionalnye Interesy, Granitsy, Perspektivy [Russian State: National Interests, Borders, Prospects]* (Moscow: Novyi khronograf, 2008).

² Leonid Vardomskii, *Rossiiskoe Porubezhe v Usloviakh Globalizatsii [Russian Borderlands in Conditions of Globalization]* (Moscow: Knizhnyi Dom “LIBROKOM,” 2009).

³ The modern neighbors of the Russian Federation on the European part of the border (the Northwestern, Central and Southern federal districts of the Russian Federation) are Norway, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus and Ukraine.

⁴ The modern neighbors of the Russian Federation on the Asian part of the border (North-Caucasian, Volga, Ural, Siberian and Far Eastern federal districts) are Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China and North Korea.

⁵ The Northwestern segment of the border of Russia in the given article covers borders of the six regions of the Northwestern Federal District (NWFD) – the Republic of Karelia, Murmansk, Leningrad, Pskov, Kaliningrad Regions, and St. Petersburg – with the EU member states – Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The general extent of this segment of the border is almost 3,200 km.

⁶ The Far Eastern segment of the border of Russia in the given article covers borders of the four regions of the Far Eastern Federal District (FEFD) – Primorye and Khabarovsk Territories, the Amur, and the Jewish

this research.

Despite the fact that typological differences between Russia's European and Asian borders were originally discovered by theoretical and historical analysis, their relevance is confirmed by contemporary empirical data. In particular, their existence is proved by statistics of the dynamics of cross-border relations in the Northwestern and Far Eastern segments of the Russian border in the post-Soviet period. Over the past twenty years, cross-border relations in both sections of the border have had their ups and downs, but, nevertheless, a high degree of difference between them remained steady. Flows of people, goods and investment crossing the border between the border regions of the Northwestern Federal District⁷ (NWFD) of the Russian Federation and the EU, far exceeds in volume the same flows between the border regions of the Far Eastern Federal District⁸ (FEFD) of Russia and China. So, in 2007, on the eve of the global economic crisis, from the EU to Russia, through the Northwestern section of the border, were made no less than 2,503,000 trips.⁹ At the same time, from China to Russia in 2007 in total (that is, across the whole Russian border) were taken 765,000 trips,¹⁰ of which, in the Far Eastern part of the border, were taken about two-thirds, or about 500,000. Also in 2007, the volume of cross-border trade of the regions of NWFD with neighboring EU countries was estimated at \$15.3 billion, and the trade of the regions of FEFD with China was estimated to be worth just over \$4 billion.¹¹ Finally, the amount of foreign direct investment received in 2007, in the regions of NWFD reached \$1.4 billion, and in the regions of FEFD was only \$226 million.¹²

From 2008, the global financial and economic crisis affected the dynamics of cross-border relations in these segments of the Russian border. The particularly serious consequences of this crisis for European countries led to the slower development of their cooperation with Russia. So, in 2011, from the EU to Russia, through the Northwestern segment of the border were taken at least 2,921,000

Autonomous Regions – with the People's Republic of China. The general extent of this segment of the border is about 3,200 km.

⁷ The regions of the Northwestern Federal District in this article cover adjacent to the Northwestern border Republic of Karelia, Murmansk, Leningrad, Pskov and Kaliningrad Regions and St. Petersburg.

⁸ The regions of the Far Eastern Federal District in this article cover adjacent to the Far Eastern border Primorye and Khabarovsk Territories, the Amur and Jewish Autonomous Regions.

⁹ This number includes trips from EU countries, which border with Russia only in the Northwestern Federal District (Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), so the actual number of entries from the EU through this segment of the border was greater. Calculated by the author from: "Vezd i Vyezd v Rossiю Inostrantsev" [Entrance and Departure of Foreigners to Russia], *Federalnyi Portal: Protown.ru*, accessed June 26, 2012, <http://www.protown.ru/information/hide/3614.html>.

¹⁰ "Vezd i Vyezd."

¹¹ Andrei Volynchuk, ed., *Geopoliticheskii Potentsial Transgranichnogo Sotrudnichestva Stran Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskogo Regiona* [Geopolitical Potential of Trans-border Cooperation of the Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region] (Vladivostok: Dalnauka; Izd-vo VGUES, 2010), 367; Bronislav Chebotarev, "Prigranichnoe Torgovo-ekonomicheskoe Sotrudnichestvo: Zarubezhnyi Opyt i Problemy Rossii [Border Trade and Economic Cooperation: Foreign Experience and Problems of Russia]," *Izvestiia Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta Ekonomiki i Finansov* 2 (2009): 70.

¹² Calculated by the author from: "Investitsii v Rossii. 2009 g. [Investments into Russia. 2009]," *Federalnaia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki*, accessed April 20, 2012, http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/B09_56/Main.htm.

trips.¹³ In the same year, from China to Russia were made 844,000 trips,¹⁴ of which through the Far Eastern segment of the border were no more than 400,000. The volume of cross-border trade between the regions of NWFD and neighboring countries of the EU in 2011 was estimated at \$11.2 billion,¹⁵ and between regions of FEFD and China, a little more than \$6 billion.¹⁶ The volume of foreign direct investment received in 2011 in the regions of NWFD was \$3.9 billion, and in the regions of FEFD – \$703 million.¹⁷ Thus, the impact of the crisis was reflected in a narrowing of differences between the Northwestern and Far Eastern portions of the border in two of the three indicators of their functioning. Nevertheless, the overall gap in the level of cross-border relations in these segments of the Russian border remains very large.

The differences between the Northwestern and Far Eastern segments of the Russian border can be traced in the present time not only to the functional (flows), but also to the institutional level. The Northwestern border of Russia leads in the number and quality of the institutions of trans-border cooperation created there. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, on this segment of the border perimeter there were nine Euroregions established by municipal and regional authorities of Russia and neighboring countries of the EU, as well as four special economic zones.¹⁸ On the Far

¹³ Calculated by the author from: “Rossiia v Tsifrakh. 2012 g. [Russia in figures. 2012],” *Federalnaia Sluzhba Gosudarstvennoi Statistiki*, accessed June 26, 2012, http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b12_11/IssWWW.exe/Stg/d1/10-12.htm.

¹⁴ “Rossiia v Tsifrakh. 2012 g.”

¹⁵ Calculated by the author from: “Vneshniaia Torgovlia Subektov SZFO Rossiiskoi Federatsii [Foreign Trade of the Subjects of the NWFD of the Russian Federation],” *Severo-Zapadnoe Tamozhennoe Upravlenie Federalnoi Tamozhennoi Sluzhby*, accessed June 21, 2012, http://sztu.customs.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=189&Itemid=104.

¹⁶ Calculated by the author from: “Dlia Khabarovskogo Kraia Kitai Iavliaetsia Glavnym Torgovo-ekonomicheskim Partnerom [For Khabarovsk Territory China is the Main Trade and Economic Partner],” *Vostok-Media*, accessed August 21, 2012, <http://vostokmedia.com/n143905.html>; “Itogi Vneshneekonomicheskoi Deiatelnosti Amurskoi Oblasti za 2011 god [Results of Foreign Economic Activities of the Amurskaia Area in 2011],” *Pravitelstvo Amurskoi oblasti*, accessed August 21, 2012, www.amurobl.ru/wps/portal/!ut/p/c5/rc1JDoIwFADQs3gB_i9TZVKEGgBQ4IIJsDBhjACskEpCeXi7gzrwdPMhh9iqG6IH0VfsqnpBBb15xB2zCcPdeokYJCy0j7j7derEBKWSOX-N66gLZyGON04c7qYycYORbd3zXjPDA3kdOosUJfmK351xyjBIjJNwi5_XBZat2M3rNAkLIH8-2nNfIb8UdLpDTn7dqwum_d1UKZbwJBRWDqqZqEUJNQjVNP5DZ0Imh8QbBvs78h2o!/d13/d3/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/; “Itogi Sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo Razvitiia Primorskogo Kraia v 2011 g. [Results of Social and Economic Development of Primorskii Region in 2011],” *Administratsiia Primorskogo Kraia*, accessed August 21, 2012, http://www.primorsky.ru/documents/departments_economrazv/yan_dekabr2011.pdf; “Sotrudnichestvo EAO i KNR [Cooperation of JAA with the Peoples Republic of China],” *Ofitsialnyi Internet-portal Organov Gosudarstvennoi Vlasti Evreiskoi Avtonomnoi Oblasti*, accessed August 21, 2012, <http://www.eao.ru/?p=87>.

¹⁷ Calculated by the author from: “Priamyie Inostrannye Investitsii v Rossiiskuiu Federatsiiu po Subektam [Direct Foreign Investments into the Russian Federation by Subjects],” *Bank Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, accessed August 26, 2012, http://www.cbr.ru/statistics/print.aspx?file=credit_statistics/dir-inv_reg-in.htm&pid=svs&sid=itm_12995.

¹⁸ Viktor Koshelev, “Evroregion ‘Baltika’” [Euroregion ‘Baltic’], *Kosmopolis 2* (2008): 87; Aleksei Kuznetsov, “Perspektivy Evroregionov s Rossiiskim Uchastiem s Uchetom Novatsii Regionalnoi Politiki ES [Prospects of Euroregions with Russian Participation Taking into Account Innovations of the Regional Policy of the EU],” *Baltiiskii Region 2* (2009): 50; Vladimir Moskovkin, “Metody Analiza i Instrumenty Transgranichnoi

Eastern border in the 1990s and 2000s four free economic zones and two border-trade and economic complexes (*prigranichnye torgovo-ekonomicheskie komplekсы*) were created.¹⁹ However, currently, for political reasons or lack of a legal framework, these zones and complexes are not functioning. Any institutions comparable to Euroregions in scope and level of joint coordination of cross-border cooperation in this part of the border during the post-Soviet period have also not appeared.

The differences in the Northwestern and Far Eastern segments of the border can be explained in different ways. The most obvious and economical way to explain them is the situational approach, which focuses on the study of short-term and medium-term factors. According to this approach, the state of studying borders may be a direct result of foreign and border policies implemented in the 1990s and 2000s by the Russian government towards both Europe and the Far East (especially towards China).

Russia's policy towards the EU and China in the past twenty years was not identical. Russian-European relations in this period were characterized by a pronounced instability and volatility. Political understanding between the parties has been repeatedly affected by the acute crises related to events in Chechnya, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. On the contrary, the relationship between Russia and China, which with good reason is called a "strategic partnership," has remained consistently positive and strong. If cross-border cooperation between the two countries is primarily due to the nature of their foreign policy cooperation, its development on the Far Eastern border would be much more confident and successful than on the Northwestern border. However, as stated above, the actual trend is the opposite.

In Russia the policy in the field of border protection, customs, immigration and informational control is formed almost exclusively by the central government and is highly unified.²⁰ In the post-Soviet period, and especially since the early 2000s, Moscow has sought to avoid decisions that could lead to any violation of the unity of the border space, such as the appearance of special regional regimes functioning of the border. This does not mean that the central government completely did not want to take into account the interests of the regions and was only concerned about border security. On the contrary, to some extent, the region's interests in the development of cross-border contacts received the regular support of Moscow. However, this support is distributed by the federal center on border regions of Russia quite evenly.

As an example of the beneficial effects of Moscow's policy on cross-border cooperation in

Kooperatsii [Methods of the Analysis and Tools of Trans-border Cooperation],” *Regionalnaia Ekonomika: Teoriia i Praktika* 3 (2009): 5; “Osobyie Ekonomicheskie Zony RF [Special Economic Zones of the Russian Federation],” *Ministerstvo Ekonomicheskogo Razvitiia i Torgovli Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, accessed August 28, 2012, http://www.economy.gov.ru/wps/wcm/connect/032f980044d449d69097f5af753c8a7e/sez_rus.pdf?

¹⁹Vardomskii, *Rossiiskoe Porubezhe*, 122-124; Galina Kostyunina and Vladimir Baronov, “Transgranichnye Svobodnye Ekonomicheskie Zony v Zarubezhnykh Stranakh (na primere Kitaia) [Trans-border Free Economic Zones in Foreign Countries (an example of China)],” *Vestnik MGIMO* 2 (2011): 176; Liubov Moiseeva, “Sozdanie na Dalnem Vostoke Rossii Sovmestnykh Predpriatii s Predprinimateliami Stran ATR v 1985-2000 gg. [The Creation of Joint Ventures with Businessmen of the Countries of the APR in the Russian Far East in 1985-2000],” *Rossiiia i ATR* 2 (2005): 62-63.

²⁰ The supervisory role is played by the State Border Commission.

the Northwestern segment of the border, many authors cite the “Concept of the Creation of Four Common Spaces” of 2003 and the development of its “Road Maps” of 2005,²¹ signed by representatives of the Russian Federation and the EU. Without changing substantially the conceptual foundations of Russia’s border policy, these documents indeed helped to revive inter-regional, inter-municipal and other inter-societal interaction on this segment of the border, and to accelerate the processes of building Euroregions across these borders. However, in the post-Soviet period Russia and China also signed a number of agreements aimed at promoting cross-border relations between the Russian Far East and adjacent Chinese provinces. The last and most significant of these – “The Program of Cooperation between the Regions of the Far East and Eastern Siberia of the Russian Federation and Northeast of Peoples Republic of China (2009-2018)”²² – was signed by the prime ministers of the two countries in October 2009. Nevertheless, the real, practical effect of these agreements was much less significant.²³ Thus, recognizing certain impacts of government border policy on the functional and institutional state of the two studied segments of the border, it should be emphasized that such a policy is unlikely to be considered as its decisive factor.

The contemporary features of the Northwestern and the Far Eastern segments of the Russian border (and more widely, its European and Asian parts) cannot be satisfactorily explained without taking into account their typological specificity, which was formed under the influence of historical factors. Unfortunately, a historical typological approach is rarely used in limological studies. However, these studies in Russia and abroad reached a number of important conclusions on the base of which the author has developed a historical typology of borders,²⁴ allowing us to describe the main differences of the studied segments of the Russian border. This typology distinguishes three types of

²¹ Aleksandr Panov, ed., *Vneshniaia Politika i Diplomatia Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [Foreign Policy and Diplomacy of the Russian Federation] (Moscow: Vostok-Zapad, 2010), 284-285, 291-292; “ES i Rossiia: Politicheskie Otnosheniia [EU and Russia: Political Relations],” *Predstavitelstvo ES v Rossii*, accessed April 28, 2012, http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu_russia/political_relations/index_ru.htm.

²² “Programma Sotrudnichestva Mezhdru Regionami Dalnego Vostoka i Vostochnoi Sibiri RF i Severo-Vostoka KNR (2009 – 2018 gg.) [The Program of Cooperation between Regions of the Far East and Eastern Siberia of the Russian Federation and the Northeast of the People’s Republic of China (2009 – 2018)],” *Irkutskaiia oblast. Predstavitelstvo v Kitae*, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.irkutsk.cn/site/uploads/File/Programm.doc>.

²³ Perhaps, the most important agreements between Russia and China are the agreements on visa-free travel of tour groups (of December 18, 1992, and then of February 29, 2000), which have no analogues among agreements between Russia and the EU (Anton Kireev, *Dalnevostochnaia Granitsa Rossii: Tendentsii Formirovaniia i Funktsionirovaniia (seredina XIX – nachalo XX vv.)* [The Far Eastern Border of Russia: Tendencies of Formation and Functioning (mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of twenty-first century)] (Vladivostok: Izd-vo DVFU, 2011), 292-293, 297). However, these agreements have not become a basis for such a rapid and sustained increase in the number of entries to Russia (and departures) on the Far Eastern segment of the border, as can be observed on the Northwestern segment of it.

²⁴ The most direct impact on the construction of the proposed typology are the works of Alfred Riber (Alfred Riber, “Meniaiushchiesia Kontseptsii i Konstruktsii Frontira: Sravnitelno-istoricheskii Podkhod [Changing Concepts and Designs of the Frontier: The Comparative-historical Approach]” in *Novaia Imperskaia Istoriia Postsovetskogo Prostranstva* [A New Imperial History of Post Soviet Space] ed. Iliia Gerasimov, Sergei Glebov, Aleksandr Koplunovskii, Marina Mogilner, Aleksandr Semenov, (Kazan: Tsentr Issledovaniia Natsionalizma i Imperii, 2004), 199-222); Iakovenko, *Rossiiskoe Gosudarstvo*.

Table 1. Historical Typology of Borders

Parameter Description / Type of Border	Structural Basis	Spatial Form	Subject and Degree of Control	Subjective Stability
Broad	The contour of the military-political structure of the imperial state	Territorial continuous zone (band), with unclearly defined coordinates	Feeble and irregular state control	Perceived as temporary, the current result of the process of expansion
Linear	Complex of coinciding contours of military-political, economic, social and cultural structures of the nation-state	Territorial continuous line with precise coordinates	Strong and regular state control	Perceived as a constant and natural
Transnational	Various divergent contours of military-political, economic, social and cultural structures of transnational communities	Territorial or extraterritorial dotted line (diffuse areal) with fluctuating coordinates	State and non-state control of varying degrees of strength and regularity	Perceived as a situational result of identification and identity

border – *broad*, *linear*, and *transnational* – which correspond to different stages in the development of the society and the state. All three of these types of border are characterized and compared in the typology by four parameters: (1) the structural basis, (2) the spatial form, (3) the subject and degree of control, and (4) subjective stability (see Table 1).

In this typology the structural basis of the border is understood by its connection with the contours of the various structures of social relations (military-political, economic, social-demographic, and cultural) and existing due to the different types of social systems (states, economies, populations, ethnic and other groups) of these structures. The spatial form of the border is the sum of its geometrical characteristics in a geographic space, including the width, continuity/discontinuity, and the degree of accuracy of defining its coordinates. The parameter of control describes a subject, exercising control over the border, as well as its possibility to regulate its functioning. With respect to subjective stability, this parameter reflects the perception of spatial stability, and the permanence of the border of a particular social system (community).

According to the proposed typology, historically the first type of border, related in origin with traditional societies and early states, reached its fullest development in feudal empires, is defined here as *broad*.²⁵ The structural basis for broad borders is the spatial contour of the military-political

²⁵ In contemporary research, especially by Western authors, typological features of the “broad” border are often attributed to such type of border as the “frontier.” In this case, the term “frontier” has a very extensive and vague meaning. Essentially, all types of social boundaries that existed before the advent of the nation-state are called a frontier (For example: Riber, “Meniaushchiesia Kontseptsii,” 199-222; Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History,” *The American Historical Review* 104 (3) (1999): 814-841). The author uses the term frontier in the narrow sense, and it is close to the way it was used by Frederick J. Turner, as the border of areas of resettlement and a social

structure (a network of military and administrative outposts, security and defense constructions and communications) of a multiethnic imperial state. Due to the expansionist, not legal, but violent essence of empire, the broad border is characterized by a fuzzy definition of the limits of state sovereignty, and gradation in the border zone, which may have a relatively large territorial depth. As the borders of the empire have mainly military and political functions, state control of the cross-border inter-societal flows, as a rule, is weak and irregular. In the minds of subjects and the ruling elite of the empire the broad border is usually perceived as temporary, an intermediate, and the current result of the constant process of territorial expansion.

In the era of industrial societies and nation-states there are borders of the second – linear – type.²⁶ The linear border is based on the spatial contours of the military-political, economic, social-demographic and cultural structures of the nation-state. The nation-state is often described as mono-ethnic, though, it would be better to call it mono-societal. The close connection between the national government and a specific society allows the clear definition of the limits of its sovereign rights and to bring its borders to an exact demarcated linear form. The complex nature of the linear border, its impact on all spheres of public life, and clear definition of its geographic coordinates, are the prerequisites for the establishment of strong and regular government control on border of this type. Not only in state ideology, but also in the public consciousness, such borders are usually presented as natural, permanent and indestructible.

Formation of borders of the transnational type²⁷ began in the second half of the twentieth century, in connection with the transition of a number of Western societies in the post-industrial stage of historical development. The structural basis of the appearance of transnational borders is the breakdown of the geographical unity of the state and society, and the spatial separation of the contours of various social systems (communities), which are now much more likely to overlap than coincide with each other. The erosion of sovereign rights of the state, their restriction by the rights of spatially more mobile groups and individuals leave borders with no precise territorial coordinates. Transnational borders take the form of territorial or extraterritorial diffuse (dotted) zones. Destatisation and decentralization of control over the functioning of the various transnational borders helps, in general, to increase the permeability of borders. The idea of the border as a result of self-identity, and therefore, as a dynamic, constantly fluctuating phenomenon, is established in the public consciousness.

The proposed typology, of course, gives only a very general and simplified history of state borders, and abstracts from many of their parameters. However, its application to the analysis of the

boundary. To refer to pre-industrial state borders, we introduce a new concept of the broad border.

²⁶ On formation of the concept of the “linear” border, see: Riber, “Meniaushchiesia kontseptsii,” 209-213.

²⁷ The study of borders of this type was initiated by representatives of the transnationalism theory. See: Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, eds., *Transnational Relations and World Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972). In modern research there is no integrated and general concept of transnational borders. However, the bibliography of works devoted to the theoretical understanding of various functional, mental and spatial features of borders of the era of post-industrial society today is very extensive (See: Chris Rumford, “Introduction: Theorizing Borders,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 9(2) (2006): 155-169).

historical development of the Northwestern and Far Eastern borders of Russia reveals significant differences between them.

A direct historic comparison of the Northwestern and Far Eastern borders of Russia can lead to conclusion that the former is much “younger” than the latter. Indeed, the spatial configuration of the Northwestern border of Russia in its current form was formed (in its various sections) in the period from 1917 to 1991. As for the Far Eastern border, after the initial delimitation and demarcation of 1858-1861, its geographical position remained largely unchanged. However, the time of establishing of the spatial coordinates of the border and its historical age are not the same thing. Because the border is not only a geographical object but also a social phenomenon, which can change its position in space, yet preserving its essence. That is why the age of the border, and more precisely the level of its historical development, should be evaluated primarily by its social parameters.

Since the existence of a broad border is typologically related to the territorial expansion of the imperial state, the withdrawal of such expansion can be considered as the first prerequisite for the historic transition from the broad border to a linear border type. The expansion of the Russian empire in the northwest was largely completed at the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Since that time, the Russian government has adopted a policy of systematic consolidation and development of the Northwestern border, following the experience and rules of the European states. As a consequence of a number of international treaties in 1795-1815, the Northwestern border of the empire was not only delimited, but was very carefully (for its time) demarcated.²⁸ Parallel to this, between 1782-1829 Russian authorities issued a series of regulations that defined the organization and rules of the border guards, and customs and immigration controls on the Northwestern border.²⁹ It should be noted that a regular border guard service, created by these laws, was separated from the army of the empire, and obeyed civil (economic) agencies.

After the Congress of Vienna of 1814-1815 until the First World War the Russian borderline in the west remained unchanged. This contributed to the gradual transformation of the formal Northwestern border into a symbolic, stable, stereotypical image in the public consciousness. However, the symbolic border did not fully coincide with the formal. It did not include Poland and Finland, which were parts of Tsarist Russia. Despite the limitations and fragility of the autonomy of these regions (especially Poland) from Russia, Russian society, until the early twentieth century, was clearly aware of their isolation, separated from the organic core of the Russian Empire.³⁰

Public attitudes toward the Northwestern border of Russia were manifested most clearly during the revolutions of 1917 and the Civil War. During this period, the vast majority of Russian political parties (except the extreme right), one way or another, expressed their agreement with the desire of Poland and Finland to be independent. The *Vremenyi* (Provisional) government declared its

²⁸ Vladimir Pronichev, ed., *Pogranichnaia Sluzhba Rossii: Entsiklopediia. Formirovanie Granits. Normativnaia Baza. Struktura. Simvoly* [Border Service of Russia: Encyclopedia. Formation of Borders. Statutory Base. Structure. Symbols] (Moscow: Assotciatsiia “Voennaia kniga,” Kuchkovo Pole, 2009), 25-26, 31-32, 34-36.

²⁹ Pronichev, *Pogranichnaia Sluzhba Rossii: Entsiklopediia*. 132-140.

³⁰ Aleksandr Vdovin, Vladimir Zorin and Aleksandr Nikonov, *Russkii Narod v Natsionalnoi Politike. XX vek* [Russian People in National policy. XX century], (Kungur: Kungurskii Pechatnyi Dvor PGF, 2007), 16-30.

recognition of the independence of Poland and Finland from Russia. A few months later, the Soviet government finally resolved the status of the former parts of the Russian Empire.³¹ However, in March 1918, the same Soviet government signed the Brest Peace Treaty, refusing the rights of Soviet Russia, on territories of Ukraine, a part of Belarus, and the Baltic, which caused a deep political crisis and considered one of the main causes of the Civil War in 1918-1922. After signing it a variety of political parties – from the bourgeois to socialist – accused Bolshevik leaders of Russia of national treachery. Moreover, against the peace with Germany on such terms were leftist Communists, which almost led to a split in the Bolshevik elite.³²

It should also be noted that the other major geopolitical concession of the Bolsheviks – the recognition of the independence of the Far Eastern Republic in 1920 (which is also seen as an interim step) – failed to significantly resonate with the public. Even though – with the worst-case scenario the subsequent transfer of the Far Eastern Republic to Japanese control – the territorial losses of Russia would have exceeded the implications of the Treaty of Brest.

As is well known, after World War II the Soviet Union regained almost all the territory lost by Russia in the period from March 1918 to the end of the Civil War. However, in the end, it did not lead to the final transformation of this restored boundary into a linear border.

The reason for this was the internal contradictions of the formation of the structural foundations of the Western border of the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. On the one hand, this border was already in the nineteenth century not only a military-political contour. With the assistance of the state, it gradually assumed importance as the economic, social and cultural boundaries of a community that was developing in the territory of Russia/Soviet Union. Prior to 1917, the genesis of this community came under the project of the “Great Russian Nation,”³³ and in the post-revolutionary period – as a larger scale project of the “Soviet people.” On the other hand, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, within this super-community were underway processes of economic, social and cultural integration of “small” (mostly mono-ethnic) nations.

During *perestroika* the historical rivalry of the two variants of national integration took the form of an open political struggle. It resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the modern geographical configuration of the Northwestern section of the Russian border. The renewed Northwestern border of Russia retained all the basic attributes of the linear borders of pre-revolutionary and Soviet times. It developed an institutional and material system of protection and control, international legal clearance and precise demarcation.³⁴ Despite some territorial disputes, it is

³¹ Andrei Gromyko and Boris Ponomarev, eds., *Istoriia Vneshnei Politiki SSSR 1917-1980* [*History of Foreign policy of the USSR 1917-1980*], Vol. 1 (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), 36; Rostislav Turovskii, *Politicheskaia Regionalistika* [*Political Regional Science*] (Moscow: Izd. dom GU VShE, 2006), 359, 365.

³² Gromyko, *Istoriia vneshnei politiki*, 52-55.

³³ For more details see: Alexei Miller, “*Ukrainskii Vopros*” v *Politike Vlastei i Russkom Obshchestvennom Mnenii (Vtoraia Polovina XIX veka)* [*“The Ukrainian Question” in the Policy of the Authorities and Russian Public Opinion (Second half of the nineteenth century)*] (St.Petersburg: Aleteia, 2000).

³⁴ There currently remains the unfinished process of the delimitation and demarcation of the Russian border with Estonia. The current borderline between Russia and the EU corresponds (except for a small portion of the new border with Latvia) with the line of the Soviet border, as well as the administrative borders between the republics

in general perceived by much of Russian society and the political elite as a permanent border. At the same time, in its current configuration, the Northwestern border has considerably greater structural durability and, since the fragmentation of the USSR in the early 1990s, the territory of the Russian Federation is now the comparatively more integrated economic, social and cultural space of the “small” Russian nation.³⁵

Thus, by the end of the twentieth century the Northwestern border of Russia was fully in line with the features of a linear border. This created conditions for its further historical evolution to the complex of borders of a transnational type. A natural part of this evolution is the significant activation of sub-national (including regional and local) subjects on the Russian side of the border, their inclusion in cross-border cooperation and the formation of transnational communities, are exemplified by Euroregions.

The historical development of the state borders in the Asian part of Russia was much slower. The expansion of the Russian Empire in Asia mostly ended only in the early twentieth century, after the failure of Russia in the Russo-Japanese War. From this time the Russian authorities ceased to regard the Far Eastern border as temporary and started its arrangement in accordance with European standards. The turning point in this respect can be considered 1909, when the previous regime of “free port” in the Russian Far East was canceled.³⁶ If, before the beginning of the twentieth century, the main task of the control of the Far Eastern border was its military and political security, provided by the army and irregular Cossack units, after 1909 the government took steps to establish at this border customs regulation and to increase migration control. Interrupted by the events of the revolution and the Civil War, the process of strengthening the state management of the functioning of the Far Eastern border was reopened by Soviet authorities in the 1920s. Thanks to their great efforts, by the end of the 1930s, on the border with China there were finally established border institutions and material infrastructure, which could provide a satisfactory level of control over it. However, the flip side of this achievement was the high degree of militarization of the Far Eastern border, its transformation into an almost impenetrable barrier, more likely blocking cross-border flows rather than regulating them.³⁷ The development on the Far Eastern segment of the Russian border of customs, immigration, information, sanitary and other controls were renewed only during the post-Soviet period and in this respect it still lags far behind the Northwestern section of the border.

The institutional and material arrangement of the Far Eastern border was closely associated with the policy of the Soviet state to change its public perception. Soviet propaganda, especially since the 1930s, had consistently emphasized the organic (instead of colonial as in the old regime) attachment of the Far East to the USSR. The logical consequence of this approach is the notion that

of the USSR.

³⁵ The concept of a “small” Russian nation here refers to the civil community that is formed within the present borders of the Russian Federation (Vardomskii, *Rossiiskoe Porubezhe*, 39-49).

³⁶ Natalia Beliaeva, Liudmila Lavrik, Sergei Liapustin, Aleksandr Popenko, Natalia Shabelnikova and Evgenia Shcherbina, *Dalnevostochnaia Kontrabanda kak Istoricheskoe Iavlenie [Far Eastern Contraband as Historical Phenomenon]* (Vladivostok: RIO VF RTA, 2010), 66-71.

³⁷ Kireev, *Dalnevostochnaia Granitsa Rossii*, 240-246.

the borders of the region have the same importance and value for the country as its European borders. It was in the 1930s that such stereotypical definitions as “sacred borders of our great country,” “sacred and inviolable borders of Soviet land,”³⁸ and the like became widely used in reference to the Far Eastern border. The image of a stable and well-protected border was not only an ideological construct, but it became part of the mass consciousness, as evidenced by the significant scale of the voluntary resettlement of populations of the European part of the USSR to the Far East.³⁹ However, in the present, as in the Soviet period, the public perception of the Far Eastern border continues to strongly depend on the character of state policy. Thus, a significant weakening of state presence on this part of the border in the 1990s was one of the reasons for the sharp growth in the fear of the “China threat”⁴⁰ and of the beginning of an ongoing outflow of the population of the Far East to the western regions of the country.

The process of bringing the Far Eastern border to the linear spatial form was particularly long and complex. The initial delimitation and demarcation of the border by representatives of Russia and China in 1858-1861 was very approximate. Suffice to say that the accompanying map of the Beijing delimitation treaty of 1860 of the Russian-Chinese border was to the scale of 25 miles to an inch. In conditions of extremely weak development and colonizing of most of the border areas of the two countries and the lack of detailed maps of the region, such approximations were completely natural.⁴¹

In 1886, the aggravation of Russian-Chinese contradictions concerning land on the coast of the Sea of Japan made the two states begin negotiations for clarification of its border. The negotiations concluded with a redemarcation of the southern section of the border, from the Sea of Japan to Lake Khanka. The results were recorded on a much more accurate map with a scale of 1 mile to an inch. However, this redemarcation did not affect most of the Far Eastern borderline that runs along the water areas of the rivers Ussuri and Amur.⁴²

Lack of certainty of the Russian-Chinese border in the river waters contributed to the emergence of its various national and local interpretations. It prevented the establishment of a normal border protection, allowing Chinese and Russian people for decades to carry out economic activity in the border area, based primarily on their own interests, while Chinese and Russian authorities usually just ignored their spontaneous economic activity.⁴³ This was not always the case. In 1929-1945 and

³⁸ Iurii Iakhnin, ed., *Ocherki Istorii Dalnevostochnykh Organizatsii KPSS (1938-1987)* [*Outlines of the History of the Far Eastern Organizations of the CPSU (1938-1987)*] (Khabarovsk: Khabarovskoe Knizhnoe izd-vo, 1987), 45-49.

³⁹ Kireev, *Dalnevostochnaia Granitsa Rossii*, 237, 258-259.

⁴⁰ Viktor Larin and Lilia Larina, *Okruzhaiushchii Mir Glazami Dalnevostochnikov: Evoliutsiia Vzgliadov i Predstavlenii na Rubezhe XX – XXI vv.* [*The Russian Far East's View the World: The Evolution of People's Perceptions and Attitudes at the Turn of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries*] (Vladivostok: Dalnauka, 2011), 65-74.

⁴¹ Kireev, *Dalnevostochnaia granitsa Rossii*, 88-89.

⁴² Boris Tkachenko, *Rossii – Kitai: Vostochnaia Granitsa v Dokumentakh i Faktakh* [*Russia – China: The Eastern Border in Documents and Facts*] (Vladivostok: Ussuri, 1999), 30-38.

⁴³ Unregulated cross-border economic activity in the form of smuggling, illegal hunting and fishing, and land

1963-1969 the inaccuracy of geographical coordinates of the Far Eastern border were used as pretexts for numerous border incidents and armed conflicts, including such events at Lake Khasan and Damanskii Island.

After a number of unsuccessful attempts, in 1987, the Soviet and Chinese parties held a diplomatic discussion about long overdue border issues. These difficult negotiations lasted almost two decades. Its main results were the delimitation agreements of 1991 and 2004, as well as the demarcation protocols of 1999 and 2008.⁴⁴ In accordance with these documents, the border of Russia and China, which is over 4,200 km, including the Far Eastern segment, was accurately demarcated with visible markings on the ground, and no longer inferior in quality to the demarcation of the borders of European Russia.

Thus, at the beginning of the twenty-first century – on such parameters as spatial form, state control and subjective stability – the Far Eastern border has come close to the level of development typical of the linear type. However, the completion of the transformation of the Far Eastern border to a linear border is prevented by its lack of a complex structural basis.

The Far Eastern border still does not rely on a dense network of internal economic, social-demographic and cultural relations and interactions. Of course, 150 years from the final moment of the joining of the Far Eastern territories to Russia, the level of its societal development in absolute terms has increased significantly. However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century regional space is still fragmentary. Relatively densely populated, industrially and agriculturally developed areas are concentrated near the military-administrative units, and provide service functions for these units. Independent from the military-political organization, the civilian, socio-economic and socio-cultural

leasing in the neighboring state thrived in the Far Eastern border from the 1890s to the 1930s (See: Iurii Ligin, *Na Dalnem Vostoke [In the Far East]* (Moscow, 1913), 102-103; Aleksandr Ivanitskii, *Otchet Vysochaishe Komandirovannogo na Dalnii Vostok po Pereselencheskomu Delu Tovarishcha Glavnoupravliaiushchego Zemleustroistvom i Zemel'deliem Senatora Ivanitskogo [The Report on Colonization of the Far East by Deputy Director of Land Management and Agriculture, Senator Ivanitskii]* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 78-81; Fedor Solovev, *Kitaiskoe Otkhodnichestvo na Dalnem Vostoke Rossii v Epokhu Kapitalizma (1861-1917 gg.) [Chinese Labor Migrants in the Far East of Russia during the Epoch of Capitalism (1861-1917)]* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 44-69; Nikolai Gondatti, *Trudy Amurskoi Ekspeditsii [Works of the Amur Expedition]*, Vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1911), 79, 276. However, the bursts of such activity were observed also much later, for example, in the 1990s (see: Tobias Kholtslener, “Vostochnaia Poristost: Antropologiya Transgranichnoi Torgovli i Kontaktov na Rossiiskom Dalnem Vostoke [Eastern Porosity: An Anthropology of Cross-Border Trade and Contact in the Russian Far East],” *Oikumena. Regionovedcheskie Issledovaniia* 3 (2009): 102-111).

⁴⁴ Van Tsi, *Problema Vostochnogo Uchastka Kitaisko-rossiiskoi Granitsy Glazami Kitaiskikh, Rossiiskikh i Zapadnykh Uchenykh [The Problem of the Eastern Part of the Chinese-Russian Border from the Point of View of Chinese, Russian and Western Scientists]*, trans. Iurii Semenov (Moscow: Russkaia Panorama, 2010), 18, 156-168, 171-174; “Dopolnitelnoe Soglasenie Mezhdru RF i KNR o Rossiisko-kitaiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Granitse na ee Vostochnoi Chasti [Additional Agreements between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China about the Russian-Chinese Border on its Eastern Part],” *Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del Rossiiskoi Federatsii*, accessed August 15, 2012, [http://www.mid.ru/spd_md.nsf/0/A7BB75D3FA653EDDC325785A003FB2DA](http://www.mid.ru/spd_md.nsf/0/A7BB75D3FA653EDDC325785A003FB2DA;); Viktor Larin, *V Teni Prosnuvshegosia Drakona: Rossiisko-kitaiskie Otnosheniia na Rubezhe XX – XXI vv [In the Shadow of the Awakening Dragon: Russian-Chinese Relations on the Boundary of the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries]* (Vladivostok: Dalnauka, 2006), 142-162.

infrastructure of the Russian Far East, which would incorporate these enclaves in national integrity, has not yet been formed. Some of the demographic and socio-economic indicators allow us to estimate the weakness of the structural basis of the Russian Far Eastern border in comparison with the Northwestern border. So, in terms of population density, the regions of the southern part of FEFD are behind regions of NWFD approximately 1.8 times (4.6 and 8.2 persons per square kilometer respectively), and in terms of economic density (gross regional product per unit area) – just two times (279.3 and 558.6 thousand rubles per square kilometers respectively).⁴⁵

Today, the government is trying to solve this fundamental problem. According to the new version of the federal program “Economic and Social Development of the Far East and Transbaikalia to 2013,” approved in 2007, 426 billion rubles of state investment should be invested in the region.⁴⁶ Simultaneously, under the program “State Border of the Russian Federation” considerable budgetary funds have been directed towards the development of the Far Eastern segment of the border, including the modernization of border crossings and transport communications.⁴⁷ The Russian government expects these measures will significantly intensify cross-border relations of the region. Another expression of these expectations can be seen in the statement of Vice-Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov at the recent APEC summit in Vladivostok, when he announced that in five to ten years the volume of foreign trade of Russia with the countries of the Asia Pacific Region will exceed the volume of its trade with Europe.⁴⁸

This forecast seems too optimistic. Despite the investments made by the state, the level of industrial production in Russia's Far East has still not reached the indicators of 1990.⁴⁹ Even more significant is the continuing negative demographic dynamics in the region, which, according to experts, will remain so in the coming years.⁵⁰ Thus, the objective conditions for a sharp increase in cross-border activity of Far Eastern businesses and society has failed to materialize.

If Russia is to significantly increase the volume of its trade with the Asia-Pacific region in the coming years, and, above all, with China, it is likely this will happen due to the activities not of

⁴⁵ Petr Baklanov and Matvei Romanov, *Ekonomiko-geograficheskoe i Geopoliticheskoe Polozhenie Tikhoookainskoi Rossii* [The Economic-geographical and Geopolitical Position of Pacific Russia] (Vladivostok: Dalnauka, 2009), 50.

⁴⁶ Vardomskii, *Rossiiskoe porubezhe*, 44.

⁴⁷ “Blagoprystoinyi Rubezh [A Decent Boundary],” *Dalnevostochnyi Kapital*, accessed August 5, 2012, <http://dvkapital.ru/2010/5/01.asp>.

⁴⁸ “Cherez 5-10 let Rossiia Budet Aktivnee Vesti Torgovliu so Stranami ATR, chem s Evropoi [In 5-10 years Russia will do Business more Actively with the Countries of the APR than with Europe],” ITAR-TASS, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.itar-tass.com/c1/513908.html>. The current share of Asia-Pacific countries in Russia's foreign trade is about 20% (See: “Ot Nichegonedelaniia [From Idleness],” *Vzgliad*, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.vz.ru/economy/2012/8/29/595529.html>.)

⁴⁹ Vladimir Kurilov, Igor Melamed, Aleksei Diagilev, Aleksandr Abramov and Iurii Avdeev, *Perspektivy Sotrudnichestva Rossii so Stranami ATR* [Prospects of Cooperation of Russia with the Countries of the APR] (Vladivostok: Izd-vo Dalnevost. federal. un-ta, 2010), 116.

⁵⁰ Igor Melamed, Aleksei Diagilev and Mikhail Avdeev, *Osnovnye Podkhody k Razvitiu Dalnego Vostoka i Pribaikalia* [The Basic Approaches to Development of the Far East and Pribaikalie] (Moscow: Sovremennaia Ekonomika i Pravo, 2010), 44-51.

sub-national subjects of the region, but to the activities of large state and private corporations closely related to them. The industrial base and the interests of these corporations (primarily fuel, energy and mineral sectors) are concentrated mostly outside of the Russian Far East and they are nearly all headquartered in Moscow. Such a scenario is consistent with the weakness of the structural basis of the Far Eastern border, and an inability to overcome this weakness by using the region's own economic potential. Nevertheless, the state-corporate model of building up cooperation with China and other Asian countries may create additional incentives for the settlement and development of the region and, therefore, complete the transformation of the Far Eastern border to a linear type. At the same time, the government should closely regulate the activities of corporations so that they do not conflict with local and regional interests.⁵¹ Otherwise, in the near future, such a model of development can become an obstacle to strengthening the economic, social and cultural structure of the Russian Far East and the Far Eastern border.

Comparative analysis of the history of the Northwestern and Far Eastern segments of Russian border shows that for the moment they are developing in the direction of building two different types of borders – “transnational” and “linear.” Belonging to two different typological stages of development is the main factor behind the features of the functioning of the Northwestern and Far Eastern borders, described earlier in this article.

The typological difference between these two segments of the border is a hypothesis, the effect of which can be extended to the European and Asian parts of the Russian border perimeter as a whole. This, of course, does not mean that the European and Asian parts of the Russian border should be seen as a kind of monolithic entity, ignoring the regional and historical specificity of the other inner segments. However, it is likely that the characteristics of other European and Asian segments of Russia's border will be situated within the limits of the typological range, the “extremes” of which were considered in this paper.

⁵¹ An example of how the corporate plans may come into conflict with the interests of the population of the region is long and ended in success in 2006 only after the intervention of the federal government in the struggle of the public of Primorye against the construction of the oil terminal at Perevoznaia.